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[Admission of High Risk Students at Michigan State University.]

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In the fall of 1963, 22 disadvantaged high school graduates with the potential for college success were admitted to Michigan State University (MSU). They were provided with financial aid, remedial courses, tutoring, and individual counseling. Nine, or 41%, of the 22 students graduated on time in 1967, compared to a national average of 40% of all college freshmen graduating on time. In the fall of 1967, 70 high-risk students were admitted to MSU from inner-city high schools in what was called the Detroit Project. Of the 66 students in this group who were black, 27 returned in 1968, a year in which MSU admitted 357 black freshmen in a total campus enrollment of 1,007. There was a tendency on campus to identify all black freshmen as high academic risks, but only 25 of the 357 students were actually admitted with records that would not have qualified them for admission. For 1969, MSU has accelerated its drive to attract black students in general and able black students in particular. But some remaining problems include finding black high school graduates, especially those with a B or better academic grade average, the financing of these students, and getting the best prepared black students to attend MSU. (WM)

Faculty Senate
Michigan State University
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Michigan State's search for more severely disadvantaged students really began 5 1/2 years ago, in early 1963. Our admissions men chose the five high schools in the state they thought served the most disadvantaged audiences, and invited the principals to nominate five boys each from their graduating seniors, boys who were not planning to go on to college, boys who did not have the grades or the test scores that would predict success in a program of the academic rigor of those offered by MSU, but boys who had the drive, the motivation, the "glint in the eye" that on a purely subjective basis spelled "success".

Our folks went to the boys who were nominated and explained that if they were willing to work for one-third of their expenses, we'd find them loans for another one-third, and to top things off, we'd provide them with scholarships for the remaining one-third. Thus was born what we called "Project Ethyl".

Twenty-two young men started in this program the fall of 1963, and the path was far from smooth for some of them. One withdrew for a non-academic reason before the end of the first term. Others ran into too much academic difficulty, despite slower-paced programs and remedial courses and tutoring. What helped hold most of them here was highly sympathetic and understanding personal and professional counseling, most of it provided by Dr. Gwendolyn Norrell, Assistant Director of the MSU Counseling Center, who literally met with every member of Project Ethyl an average of more than once every week that entire first year.

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The scene then shifts to May, 1967. Of the original 22 students in Project Ethyl, 9 were being graduated on time or nearly on time. That's 41%. The national average of all college freshmen being graduated on time or nearly on time is something like 40%.

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More and more public attention was being paid to trying to combat the continuing disadvantage of students from the ghetto, so in early June, our admissions men headed back to inner-city Detroit.

We called the resulting group of students the Detroit Project, which we started formally by inviting students and parents to a commencement ceremony at which certificates of admission were formally presented. The commencement was held on a Thursday night in a Detroit school three days later, national guard troops were being staged in that school's parking lot, right in the middle of the riot area.

Our first Detroit Project had 70 students, 66 of them black. Most were from inner-city high schools. Fewer than 10% could supply as much as 10% of their MSU costs. They had motivation, but according to the standard measurements, they could not succeed at State because both their grades and their test scores were too low to predict success.

Again, they were offered extra counseling, extra advising, extra tutoring, low credit loads, many improvement courses, an extra term to reach a satisfactory grade average.

Some would not accept counseling, some would not accept tutoring. A few came merely to have a ball; they left at the end of the first term. A few more did their best but still flunked out later.

The most surprising fact was not the weakness but the strength of these young men and women. Of the original 66, 27 are back with us this fall, completely within the acceptable academic retention pattern, and 7 more are back as exceptionally slow starters for whom we still have some hope, despite the fact they're off the academic step scale.

A high attrition rate? Yes. But some dramatic individual successes? Also, yes.

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Plans for recruiting more black students for the current academic year began in our Office of Admissions in October, 1968.

Our staff of full-time admissions counselors asked especially for black seniors each time they visited a high school.

High school counselors were asked to identify able students who might not have thought college possible because of the lack of finances, because through a combination of scholarships and part-time jobs, and government grants and loans, we could offer full financial aid to the extent of each student's individual need.

Our admissions men worked with a group of Detroit adults who had formed a Volunteer Placement Corps to help inner-city youngsters get jobs and find places in college.

We hired one of our Project Ethyl graduates and three of our first Detroit Project freshmen to recruit more black students in the community centers and churches and on the playgrounds and on the streets in inner-city Detroit.

A small grant from the Kellogg Foundation had helped us provide extra counseling support for the first Detroit Project students.

Another small grant from the Ford Foundation helped us extend our recruiting efforts for this past fall.

And a third small grant from the Hinman Foundation in Lansing helped us start a Lansing Project, to serve severely disadvantaged blacks and Spanish-Mexican-Americans right in our own backyard.

In the fall of 1967, we had enrolled 156 freshmen in an estimated campus total of 700 black students, of all levels and from all countries.

This past fall, we enrolled 357 freshmen -- more than double last year's figure -- in a campus total, as observed and counted visually during fall registration, of 1007. In addition there are something over 200 more black students enrolled in MSU centers and extension credit courses around the state this fall.

How many black graduate students there are on campus, we simply do not know. The School for Advanced Graduate Studies was assigned the responsibility for recruiting additional black graduates, and knows specifically of 28 it has aided financially.

The search for graduate students is a different one and a more difficult one than that for new freshmen, of course. This fall's black freshmen were graduated from 81 different Michigan high schools, but most come from Detroit. There is no comparable large center where black college seniors are concentrated. Initial contacts were made

last spring with every college in Michigan, and Dr. Muelder and his staff plan to seek students from this resource again this year. They need the help of every graduate faculty, of course.

All of the black graduate students especially aided by the School for Advanced Graduate Studies have some form of financial aid. 310 of the 357 of our new black freshmen have financial need and aid. The total for the two groups is in the neighborhood of \$450,000, the great majority of it from federal grant, loan, and work-study funds.

There has been some tendency around the campus to identify all black freshmen as high academic risks; this is quite untrue. Many of them had fine grades in high school and will have here. Many we didn't know were black when they applied, and they were admitted quite normally. Only a very small number--25 a term this year--are admitted as part of a planned experiment with records that would not normally qualify them for admission and that indicate they are high risk.

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For 1969, we have been more vigorous than ever before in seeking to attract the nations' most able black youngsters to take an interest in Michigan State. The same organization that conducts the annual National Merit Scholarship competition also conducts a similar program exclusively for students who identify themselves as black. Across the nation, this National Achievement Scholarship competition produces only about 1400 Semifinalists compared with the Merit program's 15,000 white Semifinalists, but we are having some small success in interesting a few of those 1400.

We are working with all schools, with the volunteer adult group in Detroit, with a federal Upward Bound program based at Wayne State as well as our own in Justin Morrill College here at MSU, with the Boys Club of Lansing, with the Human Relations Commission of Highland Park--in other words, with any group that will help us find and attract more black youngsters.

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We still have five major problems:

1. Finding very many black high school graduates. According to a 1967 state board of education survey, 13% of the total public and private elementary and secondary school enrollment in the state of Michigan is black. According to a Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority survey made in the spring of 1968, only 6% of the state's graduating high school seniors are black. This means fewer than 8,000 blacks graduated from high school in the entire state in a year.

2. Finding well-prepared black high school graduates. Our own studies indicate that in all of Michigan, there were only something like 900 black high school graduates last year with a B or better academic grade average. And in some inner-city schools, even this high a record does not predict success at State, because any student coming to MSU has to compete with all other students coming here, and that competition has now become considerably more keen than many realize. More than half the non-resident freshmen starting at MSU this fall had academic grade averages in high school above 3.60; more than half the Michigan freshmen starting this past fall had academic averages above 3.10, and most of those Michigan freshmen below a full B average came from competitive and advantaged high schools. Just how far down in grade average should we take a student? Any student? A black student? Is it fair to take a black student or any student whose preparation and performance has been so far below the level of competition at State that he faces another virtually certain failure experience? Is it ethical to go out and gather up students just because they are black and just because they would make us look good, when we know in both our heads and our hearts that we are again disadvantaging them and discriminating against them for our own advantage? It is not, and it never will be. Recruiting students just because they are black and at any cost is no good--because it will be not the University, but the student who has to pay that cost, and nothing could be more dishonest.

3. Financing these students. For three years now, we have eliminated the financial hurdle for any Michigan resident coming to Michigan State University, but the only way we ever were able to do this on a broad scale was with the introduction of the massive

federal student aid programs. We have more than 3 million dollars of this federal aid to students on this campus this year, and in this fall's entering freshman class, 48% of the Michigan residents came from families with sufficient financial need so they had some kind of grant or loan or guaranteed job or scholarship, and that doesn't even count those who get an additional subsidy via the sliding scale tuition plan. All this is fine up to the point that the federal aid falters -- and we have today reached that point. In its final two weeks this year, the Congress chose to make a 78% cut in the Educational Opportunity Grant program funds for 1969-70 for freshmen. We had more than 1,000 freshmen on this program this fall; the cut means we can have only 220 next fall. We are short \$390,000, and right now we have not the slightest idea of where this might come from for next fall.

4. Getting the very able black students to come to Michigan State. We used to say that the only prospective freshman recruited harder than a star halfback was a star Merit Scholar type. Today it is perfectly clear that just about every college and university in the country is even more vigorously going after the star black scholar. The competition for this youngster is the greatest our Office of Admissions ever has seen. For this caliber of student, it's a seller's market, much more so than in the Merit Scholarship competition where we have had some years of success.

5. Knowing how to choose those apparently-unsuccessful students who really will succeed at State. One young man in the first Detroit Project came to us with less than a 1.8 academic average in high school. One young man in the first Detroit Project finished his first year at State with a 3.1 MSU average. They were the same student -- and how do you in advance pick this exceptional case out of the crowd? We know that white tests and grades don't measure the full ability of black youngsters from the ghetto, but no one yet has been able to measure motivation sufficiently sharply so that we can know where and to what extent to ignore the standard tests and grades.

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With all these problems, of course, we also have had some successes. More of our apparently can't-make-it students are making it, more than they or we had any

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reason to expect. One way or another, we'll find at least another 357 black freshmen to start here next year; more of them, we hope, will be well prepared, and from somewhere we'll find the financial aid they need, and again we'll have a few extremely high risk students who--like some of their white classmates--need extra help.

We are, in other words, in this business to stay.

We surely do not know all the answers, but we are not waiting for some sizzling revelation to spring upon us, for we know it is not new ideas we need to make this program work.

Nothing that we're doing is very new or innovative, or creative, either in our search for more black students or our search for ways to teach them better, once they are on campus.

What we need is the recruiter who's willing to make one more visit, see one more student, find one more job or loan or grant or award after the budget has run out. That's just another way of saying plain hard work -- but this kind of admissions men we do have.

And what we need is the professor who is concerned that every student in his class, not 50%, or 80% or even 95%, but every student -- learn what is being taught, who will not automatically write off the slow learner as "impossible" or "not college material" but who will take the responsibility for seeing to it that every student in his course gets to use his brains for all they are worth. One such professor is worth much more than all those thousand graduate student tutors who never materialized. It's hard work, but professors like this we do have.

What we need is not so much a new idea but the old idea that students are important. And learning is important. And faculty are important. And truth is important. We need to be ourselves, to be a university just -- as students would say -- do our own thing. The more of that, the more sense our search for students makes.